



NEWS RELEASE

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‘Empowering Community Leadership’ Conference To Assist Community Leaders In Fort Riley Region **Community Development Training To Help Areas Impacted By Growth**

Topeka, KS – USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks announced today the Community Development Academy: *Empowering Community Leadership* initiative, a joint effort of USDA Rural Development, FHLBank Topeka, K-State Research and Extension, and the Kansas Rural Development Foundation has been rescheduled. The Academy, consisting of training for local leaders, will cover a variety of community development tools and techniques to help meet the opportunities presented by the expansion of Fort Riley and its impact to the region's communities.

In today's announcement, State Director Banks commented, "The expansion of personnel at Fort Riley represents the most significant community and economic development opportunity for the rural areas of this region in over 100 years. Following USDA meetings last summer to assess the needs of these many communities, attendees asked for assistance to help them meet the many challenges faced by this unprecedented population growth. As a result of these requests, the four organizations are pleased to offer this important training opportunity to local leaders."

The Community Development Academy will be offered in three, day-long sessions on September 14, 21 and October 5 at the Kansas Farm Bureau Headquarters in Manhattan. The Academy will provide local leaders training to help them assist their communities in planning for the challenges and opportunities resulting from the population growth occurring in the Fort Riley region. Important topics that will be covered during the Academy will include how to support more affordable local housing, improve rural healthcare services and anticipate community infrastructure needs.

Community leaders wishing to participate in the Community Development Academy are encouraged to form teams of not less than three local representatives, and participants will be expected to attend all three sessions. There will be a charge of \$50/participant to attend the Academy, and reservations can be made online at <http://www.regonline.com/96938> or by completing the registration form and returning it to FHLBank Topeka, Box 176, Topeka, Kansas 66601-0176 by September 8th. If you have any questions regarding this program please feel free to contact the FHLBank Topeka at 1.866.571.8155 or USDA Rural Development at 785.271.2718.

In an effort to assist communities in preparing for Academy participation, USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks announced today that the Agency will host four Community Development Academy informational meetings during the month of July. The meeting will cover the topics and programs to be presented in detail during the Academy. Banks further commented "the Academy curriculum has been tailored to include the various USDA Rural Development programs as well as other assistance available to assist communities in determining their community's needs."

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The four informational meetings will be held:

Clay Center / July 24, 2006: 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., Clay County Emergency Services Academy Building, 703 2nd Street, Clay Center.

Wamego / July 25, 2006: 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., Kaw Valley State Bank & Trust Company, 1015 Kaw Valley Park Circle, Wamego.

Council Grove / July 26, 2006: 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., Morris County Court House (lower level), 501 W. Main, Council Grove.

Abilene / July 27, 2006: 1:30 p.m., City of Abilene Public Library (upstairs), 209 NW 4th, Abilene.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs that support increasing economic opportunities and enhancing the quality of life for rural Americans. As a venture capital entity, USDA Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure in rural America. During Fiscal Year 2005, USDA Rural Development delivered nearly \$235 million in community and economic development programming benefiting Kansas. For additional information regarding USDA Rural Development programs, individuals may call the Agency's state headquarters at 785-271-2700 or log onto the Agency's Kansas website at: www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks

USDA Rural Development – *Committed to the future of rural communities.*

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